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SERVICE QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL POLICY AND GENDER RELATIONS IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of service quality management within the framework of regional policy on regional development, as well as the institutional and economic role of women in this process. Service quality is substantiated as a strategic factor and an essential component of public administration that contributes to ensuring the socio-economic stability of regions, improving the quality of life of the population, and enhancing regional competitiveness. Furthermore, women's employment and entrepreneurial activity in the service sector are considered as an important resource for shaping an inclusive model of regional development. The participation of women in service quality management is highlighted, based on scientific evidence, as a significant factor in developing human capital within regional economies, promoting social equality, and achieving sustainable economic growth.

Keywords: regional policy of the state, regional development, service quality, service sector, women in the economy, women's entrepreneurship.

Introduction

The issue of gender equality has historically been recognized as one of the key factors influencing societal development. In the context of contemporary socio-economic conditions, ensuring gender equality is not only a matter of protecting human rights but also a strategic factor that contributes to sustainable and inclusive development. In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken comprehensive reforms

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aimed at strengthening the institutional and regulatory–legal foundations of gender policy. In particular, the Law "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men," adopted in 2019, along with relevant Presidential decrees, has established a systemic framework for ensuring gender equality. Furthermore, the integration of gender equality objectives within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at the national level confirms the strategic importance of this policy direction[1].

In the context of globalization and the structural transformation of the world economy, regional development is increasingly becoming a priority direction of state policy. Regional policy serves as an important systemic instrument for reducing socio-economic disparities between regions, ensuring the effective utilization of regional internal potential, and achieving sustainable economic growth. In this process, the service sector emerges as one of the key drivers of regional economies, playing a decisive role in increasing employment, ensuring income stability, and developing social infrastructure.

Service quality management is increasingly emerging as an important mechanism for enhancing the effectiveness of regional development. The introduction of quality standards, the expansion of digital services, and the modernization of management systems significantly strengthen regional competitiveness. In particular, the high share of women in the service sector and their active engagement in entrepreneurship constitute an important factor in shaping an inclusive model of economic development. Women actively participate in ensuring service quality and customer-oriented management in sectors such as education, healthcare, trade, and tourism. Therefore, examining the interrelationship between service quality management and gender factors within the framework of regional policy represents a relevant scientific and practical issue in the context of contemporary economic development[5].

Literature Review

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Theories of regional development have been widely studied within the fields of economic geography and regional economics. P. Krugman (1991), in his theory of the *New Economic Geography*, emphasizes that the spatial distribution of productive forces is one of the key determinants of overall economic efficiency. According to his perspective, the territorial concentration of economic activity contributes to the formation of competitive advantages[6].

M. Porter (1998), in his *cluster theory*, substantiates that an innovative environment, developed infrastructure, and high-quality services play a crucial role in enhancing regional competitiveness. In the field of service quality management, theoretical foundations for evaluating and improving service quality have been established through approaches such as Total Quality Management (TQM), ISO 9001 standards, and the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman and colleagues. Service quality management contributes not only to increasing consumer satisfaction but also to improving the overall efficiency of regional economies[4].

Issues of gender and economic development have also been widely examined within the framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, Goal 5 (Gender Equality) emphasizes achieving sustainable development by increasing the economic and social participation of women.

Methodology

The object of the study is the development process of the service sector within the framework of regional policy in Uzbekistan during the period 2021–2025. The subject of the research is the impact of regional policy mechanisms on regional development and gender inclusiveness through service quality management. The main research hypothesis assumes that when service quality management is effectively integrated with regional policy mechanisms, it leads to increased employment—particularly women's employment—and strengthens regional competitiveness.

The study employed the following scientific methods:

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Systemic approach – to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the interrelationship between regional policy, service quality management, and gender factors;

Comparative analysis – to compare international experiences (such as those of the United States and Germany) with national practices;

Statistical and logical analysis – to assess the share of the service sector in the national economy and indicators of women's employment;

SWOT analysis – to identify the strengths and weaknesses of regional policy;

Regulatory and legal analysis – to examine laws, decrees, and policy documents adopted in the field of gender equality and regional development[7].

The conducted analyses indicate that service quality management exerts a comprehensive and multidimensional impact on regional development processes. First, the improvement of service quality contributes significantly to strengthening socio-economic stability within regions, as the needs of the population are more effectively satisfied through efficient and high-quality service provision, thereby improving overall living standards.

Furthermore, a well-developed system of quality services enhances public trust in both state and private institutions, which represents an important factor in maintaining social stability. In addition, the availability of high-quality services increases the investment attractiveness of regions, thereby strengthening their economic competitiveness and development potential.

Employment in the Service Sector and the Share of Women (2021–2025)[3]

Year	Total Employed Population (million people)	Employment in the Service Sector (million people)	Share of Women (%)
2021	13.5 million	5.4 million	48%
2022	13.9 million	5.9 million	49.2%
2023	14.4 million	6.5 million	50.5%
2024	15.0 million	7.1 million	51.8%
2025	15.6 million	7.6 million	53%

During the period 2021–2025, the service sector in Uzbekistan has emerged as one of the most dynamically developing segments of the labor market. According to

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statistical data, the number of people employed in the service sector increased from 5.4 million to 7.6 million during this period. This significant growth within a relatively short timeframe indicates that the service sector has become a major driver of job creation in the national economy.

Furthermore, the share of women employed in the service sector increased from 48 percent to 53 percent, confirming positive changes in the gender composition of employment. The growing participation of women in the labor market not only contributes to the stability of the labor market but also supports the formation of an inclusive model of economic development.

The conducted analyses indicate that in regions where service quality management mechanisms are effectively implemented, the investment environment improves significantly. A system of high-quality and transparent service delivery reduces administrative barriers for business entities, lowers operational costs, and enhances investor confidence.

As a result, investment activity increases, and the inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the regions intensifies. At the same time, the digitalization of the service sector and improvements in service quality contribute to expanding the export potential of services and strengthening competitiveness in international markets.

Empirical observations and analytical assessments indicate that service enterprises managed by women demonstrate several positive characteristics in their operational activities. In such enterprises, customer-oriented management models are applied more widely, and a high level of adaptability to consumer needs is observed. As a result, customer satisfaction levels tend to be comparatively higher.

Furthermore, women-led enterprises are distinguished by a strong commitment to principles of social responsibility, a well-developed organizational culture in employee relations, and a stable internal organizational environment. These factors contribute to the formation of a socially oriented and sustainable model of service quality management.

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Service quality management has a direct impact on the development of human capital. In particular, the introduction of quality standards in the fields of education and healthcare contributes to improving the knowledge and skill levels of the population. High-quality educational services prepare highly qualified specialists for the labor market, which in turn enhances the overall efficiency of the economy.

Similarly, a high level of quality in healthcare services strengthens the physical and intellectual potential of labor resources, increases labor productivity, and creates a foundation for long-term economic growth. As a result, the strengthening of human capital enhances the innovative potential of regional economies and becomes an important factor in ensuring sustainable development.

The obtained results confirm the existence of a systemic relationship between regional policy and service quality management. Within the framework of the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy, there are significant opportunities to adapt and implement this model in Uzbekistan[8].

Service quality management directly contributes to the development of human capital. High-quality education and healthcare services improve the population’s knowledge and skill levels, increase labor productivity, and ensure long-term economic efficiency.

The strengthening of human capital, in turn, enhances the innovative capacity of regional economies. Service enterprises managed by women demonstrate higher levels of customer orientation, social responsibility, and commitment to sustainable development principles. Empirical observations indicate that such enterprises tend to achieve relatively higher results in terms of service quality, customer satisfaction, and long-term organizational stability. When regional policy mechanisms—regulatory and legal, financial-economic, institutional, and innovative instruments—are implemented effectively and in a coordinated manner, a synergistic effect emerges between service quality management and gender inclusiveness[9]. Such an integrated approach ensures the stability, balance, and long-term effectiveness of regional development.

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Women constitute a significant share of the employed population in sectors such as education, healthcare, tourism, trade, and social services. They actively participate in establishing small and medium-sized enterprises in the service sector and play an important role in implementing customer-oriented approaches, social responsibility principles, and innovative practices. Practical experience shows that enterprises managed by women often achieve high performance in terms of service quality and organizational sustainability. Within the framework of state regional policy, the support of women's employment and entrepreneurship is implemented through vocational training programs, preferential lending schemes, small business development initiatives, and the digitalization of the service sector. These measures contribute not only to improving service quality but also to reducing unemployment, lowering poverty levels, and expanding the economic opportunities of women.

The participation of women in service quality management strengthens the inclusive nature of regional development, supports human capital development, and enhances social stability.

The implementation mechanisms of regional policy include:

1. Regulatory and legal mechanisms – Presidential decrees, government resolutions, and comprehensive regional development programs.
2. Financial and economic mechanisms – budget transfers, credit lines from international financial institutions, and foreign direct investment.
3. Institutional mechanisms – the activities of local governance bodies and the development of special economic and free industrial zones.
4. Innovative mechanisms – digitalization, support for startups, and the development of technology parks and innovation clusters.

Regional policy is formulated based on SWOT analysis, which allows identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The effective implementation of such policies requires a high level of coordination between state authorities, local governments, and other stakeholders.

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International practice provides successful examples of regional development, such as Silicon Valley in the United States and the Bavaria region in Germany. In Uzbekistan, the prospects for regional development are closely linked to the implementation of the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy, which focuses on improving the investment climate, developing industry and the service sector, adapting the labor market, and expanding the green economy and renewable energy sectors[2].

Conclusion

Service quality management within the framework of regional policy emerges as an important strategic mechanism for ensuring regional development. Improving the quality of services contributes to strengthening socio-economic stability in regions, enhancing the level of satisfaction of the population’s needs, and increasing regional competitiveness.

The gender equality policy implemented in the Republic of Uzbekistan opens numerous opportunities for women in public administration and socio-economic activities. In this context, the active participation of women in the service sector and their involvement in management processes constitute an important factor in ensuring the inclusiveness of regional development.

Supporting women’s employment and entrepreneurship enhances the effectiveness of service quality management, positively influences the development of human capital, and strengthens the socially oriented nature of regional economies. Therefore, within the framework of state regional policy, it is essential to implement service quality management while taking gender factors into account, promote women’s economic activity, and expand their participation in decision-making and management processes.

Such an approach will contribute to ensuring the sustainable, balanced, and long-term effectiveness of regional development.

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